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ABSTRACT

This action research project evaluated the impact of strategies to increase parental involvement and improve student interest in academics and school-related activities. Participating were students in an eighth grade social studies class and third through seventh grade learning disabilities classes in a rural school setting. The need for increased parental involvement and student interest was documented by means of parent and student surveys and by observing parent attendance at school functions. The one-semester intervention was developed based on a review of literature and an analysis of the problem setting and was comprised of an increase in home-school activities such as an open house, parent-teacher conferences, photo album night, special friend day, and monthly newsletters and activity packets, as well as an increase in parental contact at the school through the use of an informative bulletin board. Post-intervention data indicated that parental involvement as assessed by parental attendance at school functions continued to be a problem. Nevertheless, because of the planned activities, parents had an opportunity to be involved at school. There were positive comments from students and parents about the activities and negative comments about the purpose of the activities. (Ten appendices contain data collection instruments, data summaries, and sample program materials. Contains 36 references.) (KB)

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PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES IN THE SCHOOL

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An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the

School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

Saint Xavier University & IRI/Skylight

Field-Based Masters Program

Chicago, Illinois

May, 1999

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Dedication

To Mike, Mom, Dad, and Pat. Thank you for your encouragement, enthusiasm, and love. Without your support, I may not have been able to achieve yet another one of my goals.

Thank you Amy for all of your time and encouragement. I feel that through this project, we have become stronger teachers and more importantly, built a stronger friendship.
~Holly

To my husband John. Without your love, support, and encouragement, I would not have been able to complete all I've done. Thank you for proving what a wonderful husband and loving new father you are.

Thanks Holly for being the crutch for my weaknesses, the "pick-me-up" when I was down, and overall, my partner and friend.
~Amy

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ABSTRACT

This report describes strategies used to increase parental involvement and improve student interest in academics and school-related activities. The targeted population is in a rural school setting involving the eighth grade social studies and the third through seventh grade learning disabilities classes. The need for increased parental involvement and student interest was documented by surveys of parents and students, and by parent attendance at school functions.

Review of literature indicates that parental involvement and student interest are declining due to non-traditional family structure, a communication gap between home and school, and limited activities conducive to parent involvement. While trying to get parents involved, many school personnel, including teachers, are limited by such factors as time constraints. Because of the shortened school day, many school activities need to take place after school hours.

Solution strategies suggested by a review of literature, combined with an analysis of the problem setting, resulted in the selection of two areas of intervention. One area consisted of an increase of home-school activities. Another area consisted of an increase in parental contact in the school.

Post intervention data indicated that parental involvement continues to be a problem. However, because of the activities planned it gave parents an opportunity to get involved.

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

The students of the targeted eighth grade social studies and third through seventh grade learning disabilities resource classes exhibit a lack of interest in school, which is directly linked to and impacted by parent involvement and support. Evidence of this statement includes monitoring of: parent surveys, student surveys, and attendance by parents at school events and meetings pertaining to their child.

Immediate Problem Context

The total student population at the targeted school is 271 students. The majority, 79.9%, of these students is White. The minority is made up of 18.9% Mexican-American population, .8% Asian/Pacific Islander population, .4% Native American population. Students who have been found to be Limited-English-Proficient make up 5.8% of the student population. Limited-English-Proficient is defined as those

students who have been found to be eligible for bilingual education.

The low income student population is comprised of families receiving public aid, living in an institution for neglected or delinquent children, being supported in foster homes with public funds, or eligible for bilingual education. The percentage of students who meet these qualifications in the targeted school is 23.2%

A perfect attendance rate of 100% means that all students attended school every day. The attendance rate at the targeted school is 96.2%. A student mobility rate is based on the number of students who enroll in or leave school during the school year. The student mobility rate is 20.4%. Chronic truants are students who are absent from school without a valid cause for 10% or more of the last 180 school days. A chronic truancy rate is not reported at this school.

The average years of teaching experience of teachers at the targeted school is 8.5 years. Teachers holding a bachelor's degree with no schooling beyond that degree constitute 38% of the teaching staff. Teachers with a bachelor's degree and credits beyond that degree constitute 46% of the teaching staff. Teachers with a master's degree constitute 8% of the teaching staff. Teachers with a master's degree and credits beyond that constitute 8% of the teaching staff. The principal of the targeted school has

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four years of administrative experience. The entire teaching and administrative staff is White. This data is shown in Figure 1.

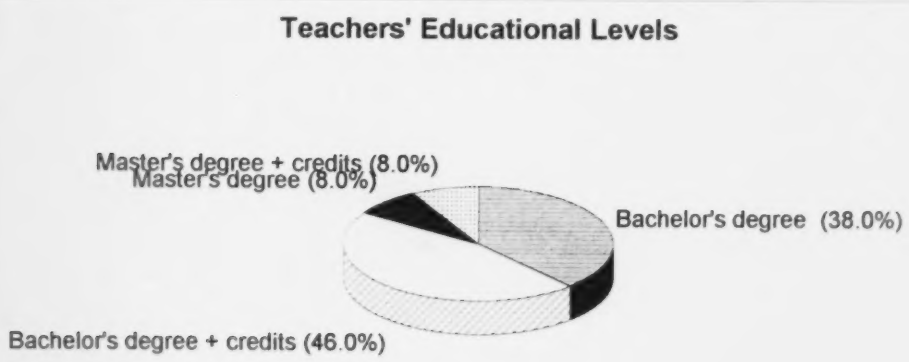

Figure 1. Teachers' Educational Levels

The targeted school facility consists of pre-kindergarten through eighth grade classes. Students are housed in two wings. The elementary wing is almost 50 years old and consists of four special area classrooms including a computer lab, a reading specialist's room, a learning disabilities resource room and a multi-purpose room for support personnel use. Itinerant personnel are the teachers who aren't at the school daily, such as the music teacher, the speech teacher, the psychologist, etc. The other wing of the building houses the junior high school classrooms. The targeted school consists of one teacher per grade level

for pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. The cafeteria, gymnasium, and library are located in the elementary wing and service the entire student body. The elementary wing also houses the administrative/secretarial office, the nurse's office, and the teachers' workroom. The junior high wing consists of six classrooms, four containing an equal number of core classrooms. The targeted school's junior high program consists of one teacher per academic subject. The average class size at the targeted school is 27 students. This wing also houses the all-school faculty lounge. The instructional setting at the targeted school is composed of the following core subjects: mathematics, English, science, and social science. The English program includes language, grammar, writing, and literature instruction.

Time devoted to the teaching of core subjects is the average number of minutes of instruction per five day school week in each subject area divided by five (State Report Card, 1997). The elementary students at the targeted school receive 55 minutes per day of mathematics instruction, 37 minutes per day of science instruction, 115 minutes per day of English instruction, 37 minutes per day of social science instruction, 60 minutes per week of music, 150 minutes per week of physical education and 60 minutes per month of art. The junior high students at the targeted school receive 50 minutes per day each of mathematics,

science, and social science instruction, and 90 minutes per day of English instruction. Physical education and study hall are each provided for 40 minutes per day.

The junior high students experience a homeroom for ten minutes per day. During this time, attendance and lunch counts are taken, and school announcements are shared as well. The electives of choir and band are offered to junior high students only, one to two times per week during their study hall period. The targeted school offers a variety of extra-curricular activities for varying age/grade levels: volleyball, basketball, football, cheerleading, art club, computer club, sign language club, band, chorus, yearbook, and newspaper staffs (P. Erwin, Principal, Personal Communication, February 17, 1998).

The learning disabilities resource room receives students at scheduled times throughout the school day. These services are deemed necessary or unnecessary according to the goals and objectives of each student's IEP (Individualized Educational Program). In addition, students eligible to receive speech services, physical therapy, and counseling, are served as necessary.

The Surrounding Community

The targeted school lies within a rural community setting of 700 people. The county which encompasses the school community covers an area of 169 square miles. The majority of the population, 95.6%, is White. The population

also consists of 0.6% Black, 0.2% Native American, 0.5% Asian/ Pacific Islander and 7.7% is made up of people with American Mexican origin.

There are a total of 13,464 households within the targeted school community. Of those households, 74% of the households are family households, and 22.3% of the total are single-parent families. The total population of 37,389 has a median age of 37 years. Those who are 35-39 years of age, make up the largest number with 3094 (10%). There is nearly a 1:1 ratio of females to males (Census, 1990).

The median income is $38,586 (Census, 1990). People living below the poverty level is 2.187% of the 30,337 people studied.

The community has one public elementary school with the graduating eighth grade students attending a consolidated high school the following year. The community has two churches of Methodist and Lutheran affiliation. The community also has two small factories, in which many of the local residents are employed.

National Context of Problem

Too often educators and parents may not be willing to take the responsibility as to the reason why a particular student is not succeeding in school. Attitudes need to change in order to have a more harmonious home/school environment (Dryfoos, 1996). All over the country, school and community people are putting the pieces together to help

schools meet the varied needs of today's students and their parents (Dryfoos, 1996). The ambivalence regarding the role of schooling in American society, must be shed and dealt with head-on (Kagan, 1994).

Popular present-day concerns exist such as, "Is my child going to a good school? Are the teachers good?" (Petronio, 1996). Many parents may get discouraged with society's negative opinion regarding public schools. In questioning a random group of parents as to what would be a high priority for them regarding education, they stated that they "appreciate that school encourages parental involvement and maintain a disciplined environment" (Bomotti, 1996). This is a positive indication that parents continue to care about their children receiving the best education available. It should be noted that this is not the first time reform in education has been deemed necessary. Historically, supporters of reform in education include such notables as Thomas Jefferson, Horace Mann, and John Dewey.

The proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child", is difficult to achieve today because few of us live in cohesive communities (Fowler, 1996). Fortunately, during the past five years, calls to increase support for young children and their families have reverberated through the White House, state houses and houses on Main Street, USA (Kagan, 1994). We know that the school's role is to educate and the family's responsibility is to raise the children.

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Many of today's parents need assistance in accomplishing that task (Dryfoos, 1996). Politicians, as well as parents, have been alerted to the importance of the early years. This is where parental involvement takes a precedence and shows children the importance of learning. One of the first national goals for education focuses on young children: By the year 2000, all children will start school ready to learn (Kagan, 1994).

Several different schools around the country have set up similar programs designed to get parents, outside agencies and community members involved with the education of children. There is controversy surrounding some of these alternative programs (Petronio, 1996 & Bomotti, 1996), but acceptance and success has been noted in other communities (Thompson, 1995). Many schools have created family support centers or family resource rooms in their buildings (Kagan, 1996). One common goal of these family support movements is to improve educational performance and well-being of at-risk, school-age children (Kagan, 1996). As economic hardship faces schools it is not unusual for schools to drop or never begin support programs leaving some students unintentionally ignored.

As far as strategies go to address this problem of poor parental involvement in schools, an action strategy needs to be implemented. Something is needed to ensure ongoing linkages with supports to and from the families (Kagan,

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1996). Most parents and educators agree that parent involvement is crucial for schools to be successful (Danzberger 1997). Over the course of the years there has been a wide variety of academic research on the link between parental involvement and student achievement. Griffith (1996) conducted a study that examined the relation of parental involvement and empowerment to student academic performance. Griffith (1996) found parental involvement consistently correlated with student test performance. In another study, Comer (as cited by Clark, 1995) discussed an inner-city school and the changes it had gone through by working with the parents over many years. The study showed that achievement test scores had increased and behavior problems had reduced (Clark, 1995). Partnership is something more than the words "parental involvement" or "community involvement." True partnership indicates a sustained relationship involving mutual respect, responsibilities and benefits. It evolves out of the recognition that most children will not reach their potential if education and educational institutions work in isolation. Involving a parent in a one-time event, chaperoning a field trip or attending a performance, might be an early stepping stone on the path of a partnership (Thompson, 1995). Unless education involves parents, and other community members, in developing the standards and implementing new teaching strategies, what may begin as a

journey toward promising change, will probably end in frustration, failure, and communication conflict (Dodd, 1996). True school reform can only be accomplished through the understanding, support and commitment of parents (Vopat, 1994).

CHAPTER 2

Problem Evidence

Research documents that lack of interest in academic subjects can be directly linked to the lack of parental involvement. In order to document the lack of parent involvement in the student's schooling, student and parent surveys were developed and administered in early September 1993 (Appendices A & B).

Student Survey

Students were asked various questions ranging from their perception of schoolwork, comfortable subject areas, and parent participation. Student surveys can be found in Appendix A. All of the forty students involved in the study, returned their surveys. Twenty-three percent of the students responded positively. The majority, 47% of the students, took a neutral stance to the questions asked. Negative responses totaled 39%. In addition to student surveys, parent surveys were also given.

Parent Survey

At the site being researched, 34% of the parent surveys were returned. This percentage indicates potential for

growth whereby more parents could be involved. Of this percentage, thirteen of twenty-seven targeted parents taking the survey are married. Parent surveys asked similar questions to the student surveys to compare perceptions of both groups, students and parents. Parent surveys can be found in Appendix B.

Open House

Another indication of lack of parent support is the attendance at open house where the surveys were made available. Through various notifications, such as notes homes, teachers' newsletters, and daily announcements, the community was notified of the open house which took place on September 21, 1998 at the site being researched. Poor attendance at open house reinforces the lack of involvement. Further evidence of the problem can be seen in the number of contacts parents had with former teachers in previous years. This evidence was obtained through discussions with these teachers (T. Dietrich, teacher & N. Lyon, teacher, Personal Communication, February 25, 1998).

Open house was held on September 21, 1998, at the beginning of the school year. The results show that this site had 22% of attendance, which can be seen in Figure 2. Of this percentage, seven of the eleven targeted parents are married. The teachers at this site were required to attend the open house, in order to give the parents the opportunity

to meet with the child's teacher. The goal of the evening is to raise the percentage of attendance, in order to foster open communication between school and parents. In order to increase parental involvement and address the problem, greater parent involvement is needed.

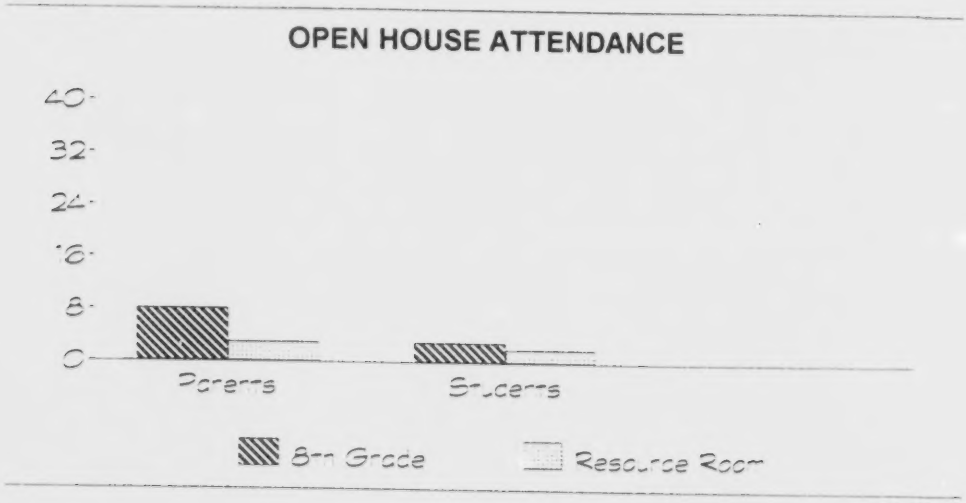

Figure 2. Open House Attendance in September 1998

Through the surveys administered at the open house, the evidence indicates that there is a low level of parental involvement in children's education at this site. Greater parent involvement is necessary for better student achievement (P. Erwin, Principal, Personal Communication, March 6, 1998). There are many reasons for parents' lack of involvement.

Probable Cause

Based on the data found in current literature on parent involvement, three probable causes have been indicated. They are: the nontraditional family structure, a communication gap between home and school, and limited activities conducive to parent involvement. Data collected through student and parent surveys support these probable causes (refer to Appendix C).

Non-traditional Family Structure

The non-traditional family structure indicates that one or more family members may not be actively participating in school events. Some nonresidential parents, most often fathers, (as in the site being studied), are excluded from involvement in their children's lives by ex-spouses (Frieman, 1997). The school can, and does attempt to, bridge the communication with the nonresidential parent by putting forth extra effort such as: duplicating parent invitations to school functions, meeting separately with parents regarding their student, and keeping both parents informed (Frieman, 1997). Ways to expedite papers going home at the site being studied are: extra papers in the office, Friday envelopes the children take home each Friday, parent signatures on returned papers, stapled information in students' agenda, and sending information home with a younger sibling.

Communication Gap Between Home and School

Many times important information that is sent home is never seen by the parent for whom it is intended, as it is left behind in desks, classrooms, lockers and hallways. At the same time, parents may have pertinent information in which they do not feel comfortable sharing with the teachers. In the past, various classrooms have invited parents and community members to share career-oriented information by guest-speaking.

Better communication leads to greater parent involvement. The purpose of public engagement is not simply to create good press. The goal is to generate greater clarity and broad agreement about what must be done to improve student learning (Wagner, 1994).

Parent Involvement Activities

Parents are informed of school activities through daily agenda books, weekly newsletters, and monthly newspapers. Parents are requested to attend conferences twice per year and an open house once per year. One of the best ways to ensure good parent involvement is to anticipate parents concerns, attempt to understand them, and address them directly and soon (Meyer, Delagardelle & Middleton, 1996). Parents can be reluctant volunteers unless they are provided meaningful opportunities to participate in their child's education. If they know that they will merely copy materials or cut patterns all day, they are even more

reluctant to volunteer (Clemens-Brower, 1997). Teachers must be especially careful to respect the time of students' parents and support their involvement. This is especially true for parents who work outside the home. Working parents are particularly enthusiastic about doing something for their child's class. The students in return, take pride in knowing that their parents are helping out (Clemens-Brower, 1997).

The site provided many opportunities for parents to be involved in the school. These activities included Open House, Parent/Teacher Conferences, Photo Album Night and Special Friend Day. However, low attendance at Open House, Conferences, Photo Album Night, Special Friend Day, and results on Student/Parent surveys was the norm. The relevant literature on this topic supports three probable causes for low attendance. These include non-traditional family structure, a communication gap between home and school, and limited activities conducive to parent involvement. In Chapter 3, there will be many suggestions for involving parents in their child's education.

CHAPTER 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

A parent's formative effect on their children's motivation to learn has an impact at every stage of development (Wlodkowski & Jaynes, 1991). As noted in Chapter 1, parental involvement and support is an important part of a child's successful education. A joint partnership between the home and school is important for the child to be successful. Children.get confused when they see homes and schools as two different worlds. According to Lawrence Lightfoot, the consequence of this confusion is that the children usually embrace the familiar home culture and reject the unfamiliar school culture, including its academic components and goals (Liontos, 1992). Substantial research links parent involvement to child development and to both academic and social success of children in school (Liontos, 1992). Liontos sites Brophy's quotes to the National Committee for Citizens in Education, which states that the evidence is beyond dispute that "parent involvement improves student achievement" (Liontos, 1992).

Characteristics of Effective Families

Many existing problems have a better chance of being resolved when parents fully understand what is happening in their child's school. By parents being actively involved in their children's education, they can be assured their children are not enduring the same deadening seat work, passive memorization, lock-step assignments, demoralizing grading practices, and hurtful discipline that they may have experienced as students (Daniels, 1996). New teaching approaches will require teachers to work more cooperatively with parents (Dodd, 1996).

According to Clark, in the work of Wlodkowski and Jaynes, the characteristics of effective families include: a feeling of control over their lives, a frequent communication of high expectations to the child, the family dream of success for the future, a view of hard work as a key to success, an active, not sedentary lifestyle, twenty-five to thirty-five home-centered learning hours per week, a view of the family as a mutual support system and problem-solving unit, clearly understood household rules, consistently enforced, and an emphasis on spiritual growth (Wlodkowski & Jaynes).

In addition, a student readily seeing his/her parent believing education is important is more likely to succeed. Also, a student needs to see that there is a formal or informal unity between the school and his/her parent.

Parents will support you if they feel you care about their child (Simmons & Simmons, 1997). The message, "Learning is in your best interest and we are all here to help you accomplish it" is echoed between school and parent in a positive influence (Wlodkowski & Jaynes, 1991).

When creating an effective family atmosphere, there are many benefits. Communication could improve as parents talk to their children about school. The children could tend to have better attendance and be more likely to graduate and pursue a college degree. Children will learn good study habits, knowing that their parents are interested in what happened in school. Parents can gain a sense of accomplishment and pride by showing an interest in their child's education, and furthermore, may acquire a desire to continue his/her own education. Studies show that there has been a decrease in the amount of time parents spend with their children in the past 30 years (Garbarion, 1997). These children then become more vulnerable to the effects of social toxicity (Garbarino, 1997). Social toxicity involves the violence, poverty, disruption of family relationships, depression, alienation and nastiness; which contaminate the social environment of our children.

Involving Parents

Ninety percent of all home-school contact is negative (Simmons & Simmons, 1997). How much more strongly do we need to be shocked by data that herald decline in our

children's academic achievement before we devote ourselves wholeheartedly and sincerely to the improvement of the education we give our children at home and at school? (as stated by Stevenson & Stigler, in Joyce & Showers). There is no single best way to be involved as a parent; parents engage in a variety of roles over time. Some suggestions for involvement include: the parent being an educator to the child, the parent becoming a part of a program in the school, or the parent as a community member supporting the school by serving on school committees and volunteering to work at school functions (Wlodkowski & Jaynes, 1991).

A few suggestions enabling parents to be involved with their child's school work include creating a nurturing atmosphere in which to provide positive conditions for learning and behavior; parents could also become learners in order to know how to teach and help their child. Parents could come to school to participate in the learning process. Once parents get involved in one school activity, they are more likely to participate in other ways. When recruiting these parents, school personnel need to be sensitive to parents feelings of fear or intimidation about associating with teachers and administrators (Aronson, 1996). An effort needs to be made to establish a good two-way communication system between home and school. Positive family support of schools and teachers enhances students' success. Table 1 displays a variety of ways that parents could become

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involved (Lionios, 1992 & Resources for Educators, Inc., 1993).

Table 1.

Suggestions for Parent Involvement

Suggestions for Parent Involvement

Assist with homework and revise assignments.
~Look at what your child brings home from school. ~Discuss school work together.
Consult with the teacher.
~Hear both sides of the story if there is a problem. ~Write the teacher a short note to introduce self.
Assist with schedule planning.
~Hang monthly calendar in the child's room with important dates (field trips, tests, etc.)
Serve as a resource person.
~Send a short note to the teacher about interests/hobbies.
Initiate conferences.
~Call the teacher with concerns about the child.
Provide study time and a good study environment.
~Keep a surplus of school supplies available at home.
Promote writing at home.
~Encourage pen pals/letter writing.
Provide educational resources.
~Build a personal library of references at home.
Model appropriate skills and behavior.
~Let your child know that if he/she doesn't succeed, it is okay. He/She is learning what doesn't work. ~Do not fix your child's problems. Show guidance.
Blend education and family activities.
~Play board games. ~Create memory books together.
Talk about goals.
~Write a success journal.
Post examples of good work.

~Chart good behavior. ~When you see good behavior, compliment it. ~Display academic work.
⇨ **Visit classes.**
~Volunteer to be a room parent.
⇨ **Reinforce skills.**
~Create a home message center with notes for child. ~Read to or with a child and discuss what is read.

Results of Parental Involvement

According to Liontos (1992), there are many positive outcomes from parental involvement, including improved academic achievement, student behavior and motivation, and more regular attendance with lower student drop out rates. Also, students have demonstrated a more positive attitude toward homework and there has been increased parent and community support. In addition, the stronger the parental involvement component the better the student performance in programs with less parental involvement. The commitment of educational institutions to family support centers, has been so strong that some states have passed legislation establishing centers as components in educational reform (eg. Kentucky, Connecticut, Florida) (Kagan, 1994). The parents who are involved with school have children who score higher than those children of similar aptitude and background then those who aren't involved. Parents who help their children learn at home nurture in themselves and their children attitudes that are crucial to achievement. Children who are failing in school, improve dramatically

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when parents step in to help (Liontos, 1992). Findings are that the more involved the parents were, the greater was their confidence in and satisfaction with the school. As parents became more familiar with curriculum and instructional goals and activities, they were more supportive of teachers and administrators (Aronson, 1996).

Project Objectives and Processes

As a result of increased parent involvement during the period of September 1998 to January 1999, the parents of the targeted third through eighth grade students will increase their involvement, as measured by: parent and student surveys, parent attendance at school functions, and parent-teacher-student communication.

In order to improve parent participation a positive home-school relationship will be established. A variety of home-school activities will be developed and implemented during the research period. These activities will provide a broad scope of friendly, fun, educational based academic activities. See Appendix D for a sample of the Home-School activity packet.

Project Action Plan

The action plan for the targeted third through eighth grade classes will begin on August 20, 1998, the first day of teacher attendance. The plan will run one semester and will conclude January 15th, 1999.

I. August
   A. 20th

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1. inform colleagues and principal of research
2. plan for reading night(s)
3. plan for Capron School Photo Album night

B. 21st
1. make parent involvement bulletin board
2. title: The Home-School Link
3. suggestion box/Home-School Activities
4. monthly activities display
5. what happened/what's next? bulletin board

C. 26th
1. first night of Team Seminar
2. drafts of two of three ready to turn in

D. August through January
1. Monthly newsletters
2. Weekly pictures
3. Checking attendance

II. September
A. 21st
1. Open House
2. inform parent of research
3. surveys to parents and students

III. October
A. 13th
1. SIP Day
2. Fall Festival

B. 9th
1. Capron School Photo Album Night

IV. November
A. 12-13th
1. Parent/Teacher Conferences

V. December
A. 8th
1. Special Friend Day

VI. January
A. 11th
1. Spring semester survey distribution

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of Intervention

The objective of this project addressed the need to increase parent involvement in the eighth grade social studies and third through seventh grade learning disabilities resource room classes at the targeted site. Interventions used to increase parent involvement were: open house, parent/teacher conferences, fall surveys (parent and student), photo album night, special friend day, spring surveys (parent), monthly newsletter, and monthly activity packets.

Bulletin Board

The researchers created an informative bulletin board to aid in the communication between the school and parents. The title of the bulletin board was, "The Home-School Link." The bulletin board was divided down the middle, into two sections. The left side was entitled, "What's happened?" and the right side was entitled, "What's next?" The left side displayed pictures, articles, and dated announcements of previous activities, while the right side previewed

upcoming events. The researchers updated the displays as events occurred.

Open House

Open House was held as scheduled on September 21, 1998. This was an opportunity for new parents to see the school and meet people. It also facilitated the meeting of teachers and parents in general. With the open house held one month into the school year, most students and teachers have had a chance to settle into a scheduled day. The students' brightly-colored art and academic work was displayed in the halls and classrooms. Students were verbally encouraged to accompany their parents to the school to view the work that had already been completed so early in the school year. Preceding the open house, there was a short PTO meeting. Following the open house activities, the school provided an ice cream sundae bar for all.

Parent Surveys

Parent surveys were administered at open house to the parents who came in for conferences and later sent home with the students to give to the parents who could not attend. These were returned to school. The surveys aided in documenting parent involvement at the site being researched. The surveys are located in Appendix B. The results of the surveys can be seen in Table 2. Student surveys were also administered and used as a means of collecting data during the action research.

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Student Surveys

The students were given a survey during school hours on the same date as the open house. The survey questioned how the students viewed their parents' overall involvement in the school. The survey is located in Appendix A . See Table 2 for the results of this survey.

Table 2.

Results of Parent and Student Surveys, September 1998

	Strongly agree	Strongly agree	Neutral	Neutral	Strongly disagree	Strongly disagree
	Parents	Students	Parents	Students	Parents	Students
Likes going to school	8	4	8	19	1	14
Likes doing homework	10	1	5	14	2	23
Does homework often	10	16	5	18	2	3
Discusses school	12	10	4	13	1	14
Does homework alone	7	10	9	22	1	5
Homework with parents	8	8	8	21	1	8
Likes parent's help	10	10	7	21	0	6
Uncomfortable subject	3	6	6	11	8	20
Attends P/T Conference	5	6	7	12	5	19
Likes parents at school	16	6	1	11	0	20
Signing of agenda	8	8	9	14	0	15

Parent/Teacher Conferences

Parent/Teacher Conferences were held November 12 and 13, 1998. Teachers met two weeks ahead of time to coordinate schedules so that there were no conflicting conferences, due to the many families having several siblings attending the same school. Parents were informed of the opportunity for a conference and notified the teacher(s) if they wished to attend. Conferences were conducted at fifteen minute intervals.

Photo Album Night

As a means to bringing parents to the school in a non-threatening manner, a Photo Album Night was organized. This event was held on October 19, 1998. Various activities were planned in a two hour time frame. Activities included: art projects, a story teller who read, Amelia Bedelia's Family Photo Album, photographs throughout the school of students engaged in learning activities, a photographic opportunity for families to have their picture taken together, a memory maker workshop and demonstration, a raffle, and a chance to match teachers to their baby pictures to win a prize. See Appendix E for the announcement and schedule for Photo Album Night which was sent home with the students prior to the event. Special Friend Day was also initiated in hopes of bringing parents in to the school in a non-threatening manner.

Special Friend Day

Because the family structure of this site is so diversified, rather than having a special day for mothers or fathers, exclusively, a "Special Friend" day was decided upon. The guests could include not only mothers and fathers, but also a special relative, neighbor, or friend. There were two targeted parents in attendance on this special day. Both are married. Students of all grade levels were encouraged to invite a special friend to spend a predetermined amount of time with them at school during the school day. The time frames varied at each grade level, ranging from thirty minutes to two hours in length, depending on which time the classroom teachers specified. These teachers were given the opportunity to specify the most convenient time, with the least possible disruptions, for themselves. On December 8, 1998, the visitors signed in at the office, were given a keepsake name tag to wear while at school, and spent time with their youngster. Special friends came into the school to eat lunch with the students, learn about different topics in the classrooms, or create an art activity with the students. Refreshments were provided in the cafeteria, giving an additional opportunity for parents to socialize with other adults. The announcement and schedule for Special Friend Day is found in Appendix F.

Spring Survey

A spring survey was included in the monthly newsletter handed out to each student at the end of January 1999. The

survey was modified to include additional questions about parents' involvement. It included questions regarding satisfaction issues of activities that were available during the school year. The spring 1999 parent survey is located in Appendix G.

Monthly Newsletters

Monthly school newspapers were sent home before the first week of each month. The newsletter included pertinent information regarding school activities and announcements. Newsletters also contained monthly lunch menus, monthly school event calendars, and academic updates for each grade level. A special section of the monthly newspaper included the "Home and School Connection." This section gave parents activities and ideas, encouraging time together in a positive family environment. A sample of the research site's newsletters can be found in Appendix H . Another resource available each month was monthly activity packets.

Monthly Activity Packets

Monthly activity packets were made available for all students to take home, beginning in August, 1998. These theme packets included a variety of activities, many of which involved parent and student communication and cooperation. Packets went home with the students each month as a means of extra practice for academic subjects, completed in a fun way. An example of the monthly activity packet can be found in Appendix D.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

Open House

Open house had a mediocre attendance for the eighth grade class being studied. With an attendance of eight parents present out of the total of thirty students, there was some disappointment that more parents did not attend to meet the teacher. Three targeted students accompanied their parent. Of the eight parents who attended, half of them are married.

With a parent attendance rate of three out of ten potential, and only two students accompanying these parents, for the targeted learning disabilities resource students, this was also a disappointment. All three parents who attended are married. The teachers encouraged both students and parents to attend, ahead of time.

In defense of the low attendance at open house, most of the parents of students at this school had previously met both the eighth grade social studies teacher and the resource teacher. In fact, some of the eighth grade students have had the same social studies teacher for three consecutive years. Some of the learning disabilities resource students have been in the program, and have had the same teacher for all four years in which their teacher has been employed at this site.

Parent/Teacher Conferences

Because parents were given the opportunity to schedule appointments in advance to speak with their child's

teachers, most parents who wanted a conference, attended as planned. There were some parents who chose not to attend for whatever reason, and others who made appointments for a conference, but did not show up at the scheduled time, or at all. Of the thirty eighth grade parents who scheduled conferences, twenty-six attended as planned. All ten of the resource students' parents scheduled appointments for conferences. All of the parents were present at the school at some time, but four parents were not punctual or showed up at unscheduled times, making it difficult for the resource room teacher to accommodate them. The attendance rate was much better for conferences than open house.

Parent Surveys

In all, seventeen parent surveys were completed and returned. Generally, the responses were positive. Results from this survey can be found in Table 2. Parents seemed to be honest in answering questions, as seen by responses in answering questions regarding homework help, time spent helping the student, etc.

Student Surveys

Student surveys had a high return rate of 100%, as the students were asked to complete the surveys while at school. Generally, the students tended to be harder on themselves than their parents were. Again, the majority of the responses, which can be found in Table 2, was very honest.

Photo Album Night

Photo Album Night was new to this site this year. Before the actual event took place, there was quite a bit of resistance to change from both parents and teachers. The only thing the teachers were asked to do in advance for this night, was to allow the researchers to take photographs of their students at various times in the months prior to this day, and provide a place near their classrooms for the researchers to display these photographs. The evening was well-organized and received many compliments for the varied activities. Many teachers attended and recommended that the night be repeated next year and become a tradition.

There were eighty-two free raffle "chances" given out (one per person) to visitors as they entered the school. Each raffle "chance" provided an opportunity for each visitor to win a prize donated by local merchants. The number of chances represented the total attendance at this event. Of those in attendance, sixteen of thirty targeted eighth graders and their parents attended, while two of ten resource students and their parents were present. One reason the percentage of eighth graders in attendance was so much larger than the resource students, was because the yearbook staff (made up of all eighth grade students) was cosponsoring the event.

Special Friend Day

Special Friend Day was also new this year, and was met with a few questions from parents, teachers and

administration. The day was meant to bring parents and visitors to this site to share in part of the students' day. Sixty-two special friends signed in at the office. One particular group of first grade visitors were enjoying themselves so much that the teacher had to politely ask them to leave, so she could continue with her daily lessons. Again, positive comments were heard after the event.

The total number of keepsake name tags given out, coinciding with the total number of friends' signatures on the sign-in sheet in the office, totaled sixty-two. Of these visitors, one out of thirty special friends was a guest of a targeted eighth grade student. One out of the targeted ten resource parents was a guest on this day. Both of these targeted guests are married.

Spring Survey

The January newsletter contained a spring semester survey for parents to complete and return to the school. Results of this survey can be found in Appendix I. Of the 152 families at this site, sixteen surveys were completed and returned to school. A sample of the survey results are included in Table 3.

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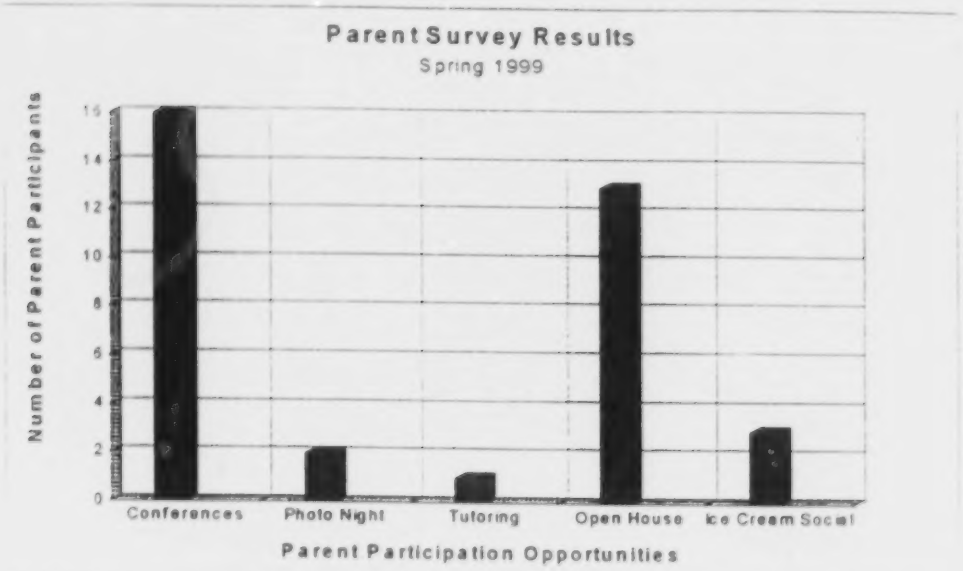
Table 3.

Results of Spring Survey March 1999



Monthly Newsletters

The newspaper was faithfully distributed to the students to take home each month. Many times, the newspaper was not distributed by students to the parents as intended. This was heard through parent feedback, stating that the information was not received. Old newspapers were also found in students' lockers and mailboxes, indicating that the information was never seen by the parents.

Initially, the newspaper was published by the language arts teacher and eighth grade students, with parent involvement contributions from the researchers. Because of the decline of student involvement due to varying reasons such as extracurricular involvement, homework priorities, or

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lack of interest, the responsibility of the newspaper was returned to the school secretary. This was another indication of the poor involvement on the students' part.

Monthly Activity Packets

The researchers put together theme packets each month. These packets included word puzzles, art activities, games, etc., to be completed individually, with partners or groups. Students took them home on a voluntary basis. There was no pressure on the students to take, complete, or return these packets. The only suggestion from the researchers to the students was to work on the packets with a parent. Each month, a few were taken home. One student actually made it a habit of eagerly asking for a packet before distribution each month. The December packet was the most popular and in the most demand. This is attributed to the fact that students had a two-week vacation away from school, and from past experience, knew they would begin to get bored at home. On occasion, a couple of the packets were returned to one researcher as a proud accomplishment from one of the students.

Family Reading Night

Another activity, originally planned as part of the parental involvement research was the Family Reading Night. Beyond the control of the researchers, a change of schedule was decided upon by consensual agreement among the teachers and administrator at the beginning of the 1998-1999 school year. The date of that event was set for April 1999. That

was too late of a time to include any of the data in this research project.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In conclusion, several varied activities and opportunities were made available in the data-collecting time frame, with positive outcomes from student and parent activities. Positive comments were shared. Parents stated "That was a creative idea." Teachers were heard stating they wanted to "do this event again next year."

There was also some negative comments made, surrounding the activities that were initiated by the researchers. These comments indicated a lack of understanding about the purpose of the activities. Examples include "What is this all about?" and "Why are we doing this?" were stated in a negative way.

The word quickly spread around the school the following day. The students who attended events and activities with their parents shared positive thoughts and comments regarding the time they spent with their families. Others, who chose not to, or could not attend, stated they regretted that they missed the event, and vowed to be there next year. The researchers suggest that future studies establish a formal method of collecting data and feedback related to each activity in order to determine the degree of understanding as to the purpose of the activity and the degree the activity met the established purpose.

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To determine the long term affect of student-parent activities it is suggested that a school continue the activity for more than one year in order to determine if participation increases. Results of this study could be used to determine the value of establishing a support system within the organization for staff to develop, implement and follow up on these activities.

The parental involvement activities at this site were provided to give the rural community an opportunity to be involved not only in the school, but also in the community and their own child's life. Other opportunities continue to arise. The site being researched has since initiated a F.A.S.T. (Families and Schools Together) program in an effort to bring families together in the school to share dinner, conversation and activities. With little or no cost to the families, the researchers continue to see the same amount of participation in regard to the families in the study. The school and community need to join together to further encourage all families to participate.

Another opportunity for parent support at this site, was the newly-introduced tutoring program. The language arts teacher at this site, organized the program in hopes of not only bringing up grades, but also tapping into the community as a resource. The response was great, initially, but the number of volunteers has declined after a couple of months into the program. This is unfortunate for the students and school. This again supports the need for

evaluative feedback regarding the activity and the degree it met the need of students and parents.

Besides the positive activities that were introduced to raise parental involvement at this targeted site, some suggestions are recommended for future researchers whom endeavor to attempt the same activities at another site. The fall and spring surveys are beneficial to give to the parents, but without the same questions on both surveys, the results are difficult to compare. It is suggested that questionnaires include a listing of previous school activities offered in which parents had opportunities to become involved. In addition to those same activities listed, add the newly-introduced parental involvement activities. By having the parents check the boxes of the activities they have been involved with in the past, the ones in which they are currently involved, and the ones in which they would like to participate, the researchers can get a better comparison of the two surveys. This may offer a simpler way for parents to complete the surveys and an easier way for the researchers to analyze which activities are most popular.

Another idea that was recently brought to the researchers' attention was a program introduced by a woman named Nancye Gaj. It is a literacy program, teaching the parents how to read to their children. So many times it is assumed that the parents can read to their children, but don't. Other times, it is assumed that just because parents

can read, they know how to read children's books. This program, Motheread, teaches parents how to read to their children. For future reference, this could be a positive parental involvement activity in a school. See Appendix J for more information.

The ideas, volunteers, and support were present for this parental involvement research project, which demonstrate the willingness of some families to be involved in parental activities in the school. Findings supported the fact that married parents were more likely to participate in their children's school activities as compared to the single parents. This is supported by the fact that there is a dual team. An individual parent could rotate involvement with their partner if a scheduling conflict arose. Single parents did not have a comparable support network. Parents could also take turns with homework, reading to their child and having discussions about school and learning. The project reconfirmed that this type of research project needs to be supported by the school and community as a joint effort. This is a never-ending process. Parental involvement will always be a goal, and school and community systems need to seek further parental input.

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APPENDIX A
STUDENT SURVEY

Appendix A

Student Survey

	Strongly Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree
I like going to school.	_____	_____	_____
I like doing homework.	_____	_____	_____
I do homework often.	_____	_____	_____
I like discussing school activities with my parents.	_____	_____	_____
I do homework alone.	_____	_____	_____
I do my homework with my parents' help.	_____	_____	_____
I like getting my parents' help on homework.	_____	_____	_____
My parents' view on an academic subject affects my ability in the subject.	_____	_____	_____
I like the idea of attending Parent/Teacher conferences.	_____	_____	_____
I enjoy having my parents come to school.	_____	_____	_____
I feel proud when my agenda book is signed by my parents.	_____	_____	_____

APPENDIX B
PARENT SURVEY

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Appendix B

Parent Survey

	Strongly Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree
My child likes going to school.	_____	_____	_____
My child willingly does his/her homework.	_____	_____	_____
My child does homework often.	_____	_____	_____
My child discusses school activities with me.	_____	_____	_____
My child does homework alone.	_____	_____	_____
I help my child with homework.	_____	_____	_____
My child willingly accepts my help on homework.	_____	_____	_____
There are subjects that I am uncomfortable with, in which my child would also be uncomfortable. (ex. parent dislikes math, student dislikes math)	_____	_____	_____
I like the idea of my child attending Parent/Teacher conferences.	_____	_____	_____
I enjoy going to my child's school.	_____	_____	_____
I feel proud signing the agenda book.	_____	_____	_____

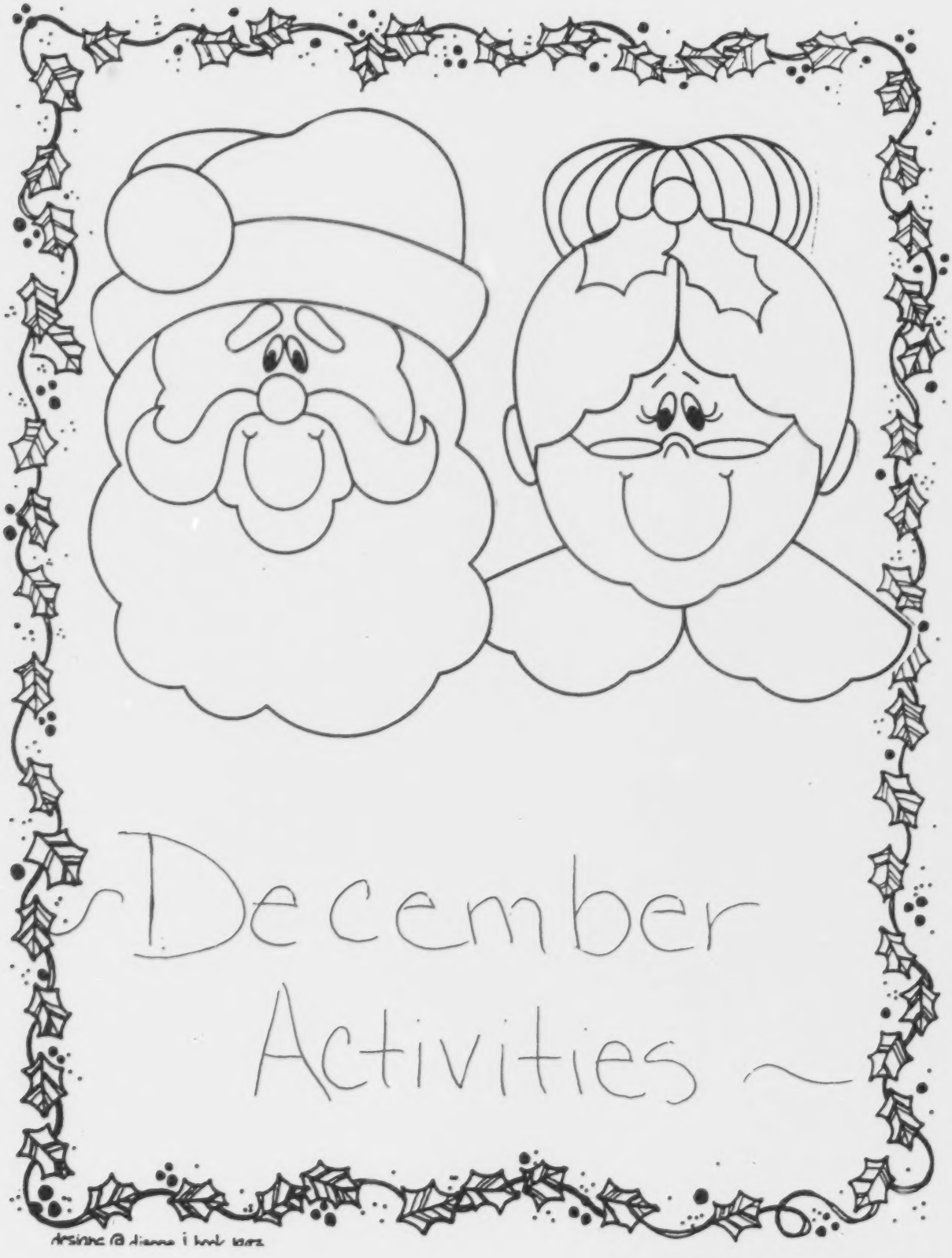
APPENDIX C
STUDENT AND PARENT SURVEY RESULTS

Appendix C

Results of Parent/Student Surveys

	Strongly agree	Strongly agree	Neutral	Neutral	Strongly disagree	Strongly disagree
	Parents	Students	Parents	Students	Parents	Students
Likes going to school	8	4	8	19	1	14
Likes doing homework	10	1	5	14	2	23
Does homework often	10	16	5	18	2	3
Discusses school	12	10	4	13	1	14
Does homework alone	7	10	9	22	1	5
Homework with parents	8	8	8	21	1	8
Likes parent's help	10	10	7	21	0	6
Uncomfortable subject	3	6	6	11	8	20
Attends P/T Conference	5	6	7	12	5	19
Likes parents at school	16	6	1	11	0	20
Signing of agenda	8	8	9	14	0	15

APPENDIX D
HOME SCHOOL ACTIVITY PACKET



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December

With your family helper, complete this calendar for December of this year. Fill in the missing letters in the month, the missing year, the missing letters in the days of the week and all the dates.

D CE B R _____ year						
unday	onday	uesday	ednesday	ursday	riday	aturday

Find a good place at home to hang the calendar so you can look at it every day.

Before you copy this to give to your students, be sure to write down any school holidays or special events for that month.

Helper: _____ Due: _____

Skill
Calendar

December
General

D-D-December!

53

Skill

Beginning and ending sounds

December brings the beginning of winter and the end of the year. You can hear the *D* sound in either the beginning or the end of each picture word below. If the *D* sound comes at the beginning of the word, color the picture. If the *D* sound comes at the end of the word, underline the picture.

With your family helper, make a short list on the back of this sheet of things around your house that begin or end with the *D* sound.

December

General

Due: _____

Helper: _____

Orderly Months 54

Skill

Months of the Year

You probably already know that December is the last month of the year. How well do you know the order of the other months? Number these months from 1 to 12 to show the order in which they come during the year.

____ March

____ December

____ February

____ July

____ April

____ October

____ January

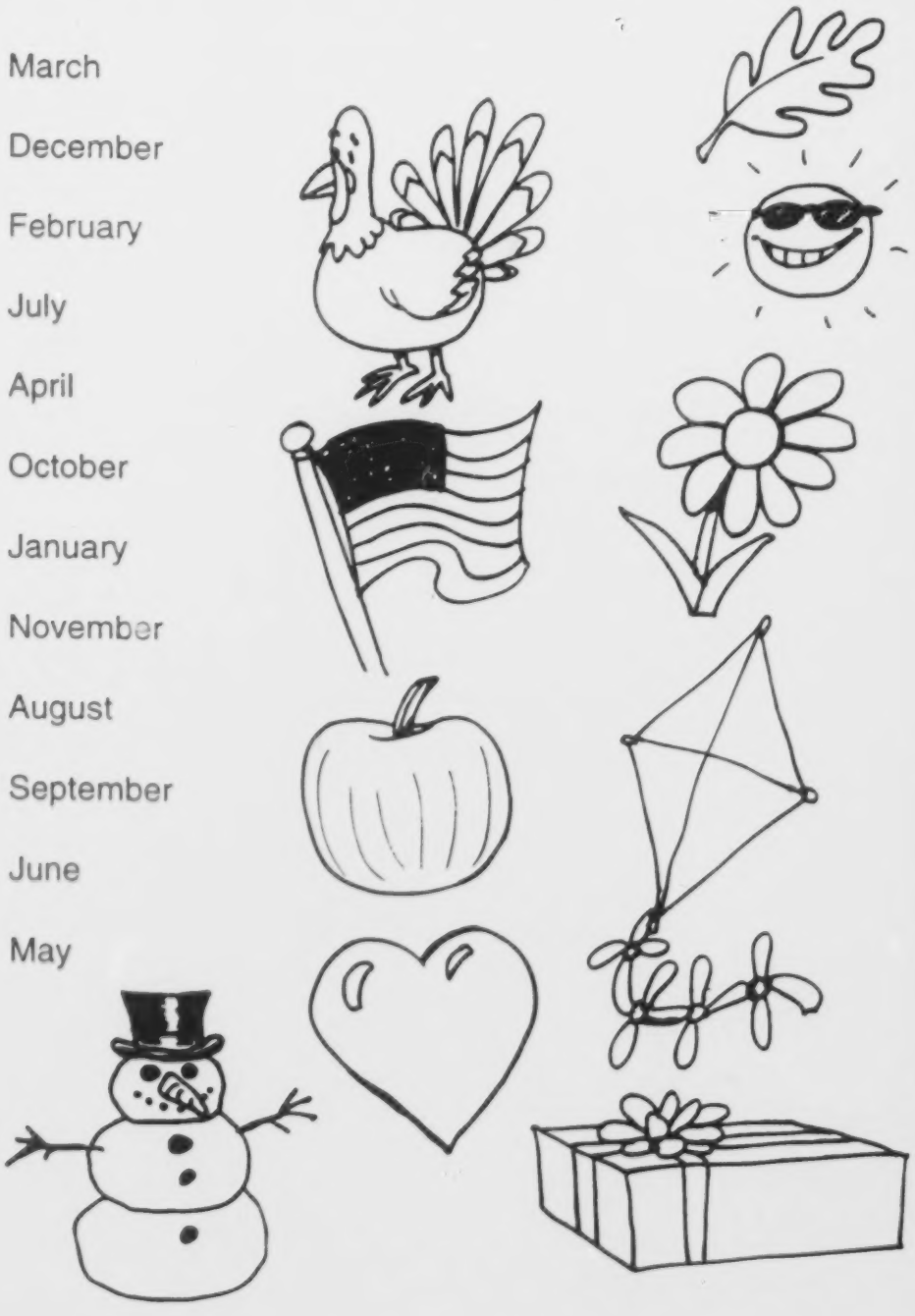
____ November

____ August

____ September

____ June

____ May



December

General

Talk with your favorite family helper about which is your favorite month and why.

Due: _____

Helper: _____

Five-Letter Bingo

Here is a bingo card that has letters in all the boxes instead of numbers. How many five-letter words can you find on this card? Look for five letters in a row going forwards, down or diagonally that spell a common word. Write the words that you find on the lines.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

B	I	N	G	O
M	E	T	A	L
A	A	H	G	L
R	R	E	A	A
C	L	A	I	M
H	Y	E	N	A

Fill in the bingo card below and hide your own five-letter words. Can your family helper find them?

Skill

Vocabulary

December

Bingo's Birthday Month

Helper: _____

Due: _____

Capital Directions 56

December is an important month in U.S. history. It marks the month when Delaware became the first state in 1787. Do you know the name of Delaware's capital city? Follow the directions carefully to find out.

Skill

Following directions

1. First write just the consonants in DELAWARE in order.

   _____

2. Next replace the third consonant from the left with a V.

   _____

3. Now add the letter E between the first and second consonants from the right. _____

4. Add the letter O between the second and third consonants from the left. _____

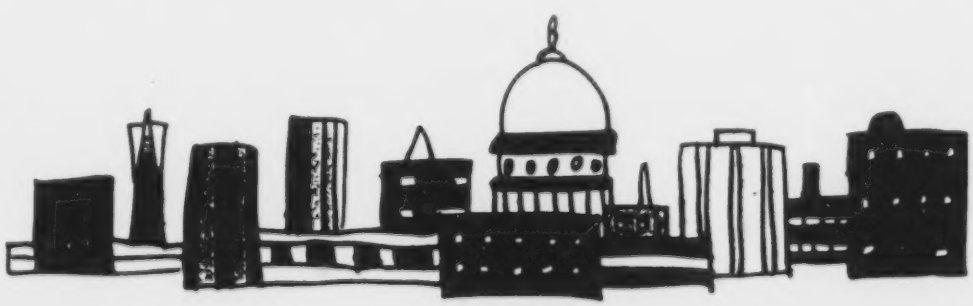
5. Finally, remove the third consonant from the right.

   _____

Do you know the capital city of your state? With your family helper, find your state and its capital on a map.

December 7

Delaware became first state



Due: _____

Helper: _____

State Dates

The very first of the 50 United States was Delaware. Listed below are the rest of the 13 original states, in the order in which they were admitted to the Union. Also shown are the dates in which each state was admitted, but these are not in order. Your job is to put the dates in order from 1 to 13, and then match them with the correct state (the state with the same number) by drawing a line. An example is done for you.

1. Delaware	A. February 6, 1788 _____
2. Pennsylvania	B. June 25, 1788 _____
3. New Jersey	C. December 7, 1787 1
4. Georgia	D. May 29, 1790 _____
5. Connecticut	E. January 9, 1788 _____
6. Massachusetts	F. December 12, 1787 _____
7. Maryland	G. May 23, 1788 _____
8. South Carolina	H. July 26, 1788 _____
9. New Hampshire	I. December 18, 1787 _____
10. Virginia	J. November 21, 1789 _____
11. New York	K. June 21, 1788 _____
12. North Carolina	L. April 28, 1788 _____
13. Rhode Island	M. January 2, 1788 _____

With your family helper, try to find each of these states on a U.S. map.

Skill

Putting dates in order

December 7

Delaware became first state

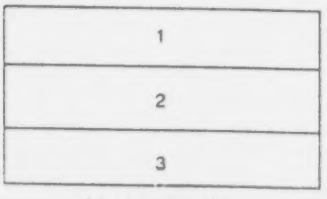
Helper: _____ Due: _____

Fly a Flag!

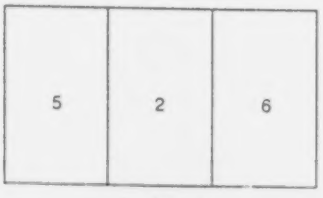
Around the world, countries work together to protect the rights of all people. Here are the flags of several different countries. Follow the chart to color the flags correctly.

Skill

Coloring by number

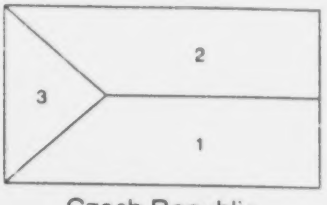


Netherlands

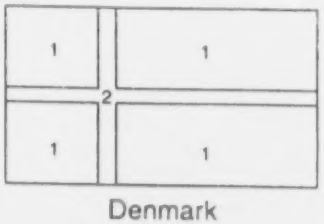


Ireland

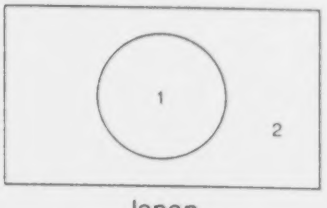
1–red
2–white
3–blue
4–yellow
5–green
6–orange
7–black
8–light blue



Czech Republic



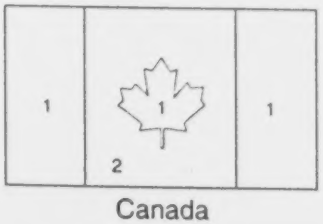
Denmark



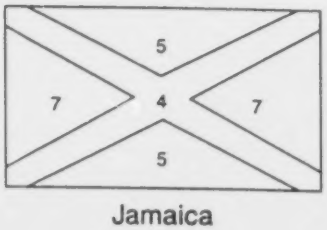
Japan

Somalia

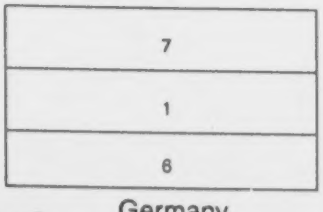
France



Canada



Jamaica



Germany

December 10-16

Human Rights Week

With your family helper, try to find these countries on a globe or world map.

Due: _____

Helper: _____

Triangle Tree

59

How many triangles can you find in this tree? _____
Color the presents under the tree.

Draw a different triangle tree. See if you and your family helper can find the same number of triangles in it.

Skill

Counting triangles

December 25

Christmas

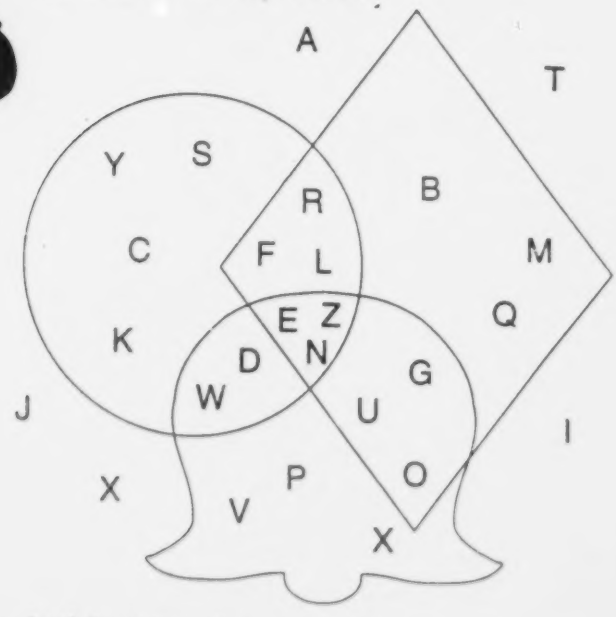
Due: _____

Helper: _____

Skill
Inside/outside

Cookie Cutters

These three cookie cutters are laying on top of each other, and they have been sprinkled with letters of the alphabet.



1. What letters are inside the bell? _____

2. What letters are outside the circle? _____

3. What letters are inside the bell and diamond but outside the circle?

_____

4. What letters are inside the circle and diamond but outside the bell?

_____

December 25
Christmas

5. What letters are inside the circle, diamond and bell? _____

6. What letters are inside the circle and bell but outside the diamond?

_____

If possible, help someone in your family bake or decorate Christmas cookies.

Due: _____

Helper: _____

Gift Match

Five brothers are each giving their sister a gift. Use the clues to match each boy to the gift he is giving.

Clues	Brothers	Gift
1. Ted's gift is not alive.	Ned	Cactus plant
2. Fred's gift tastes good.	Jed	One dollar bill
3. Ed's gift can be folded.	Ted	Giant candy cane
4. Jed's gift is red and white .	Fred	Gold bracelet
	Ed	Chocolate Santa

Skill
Logic

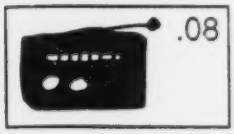
December 25
Christmas

Talk with your helper about gifts you can make or buy to give to someone else in your family.

Helper: _____ Due: _____

Lick These Problems!

Everyone likes to send and receive Christmas cards. Here is an assortment of postage stamps. Figure out which stamps you need to equal each postal price given. Write the amounts of each kind of stamp needed in the blanks.



Example: 37¢—one 21¢ stamp and two 8¢ stamps

1. 40¢ _____
2. 16¢ _____
3. 75¢ _____
4. 42¢ _____
5. 90¢ _____
6. 29¢ _____
7. 81¢ _____
8. 53¢ _____
9. 23¢ _____
10. $1.00 _____

Work with your family helper to find three new combinations. Then see if you can help someone send their cards by licking stamps, sealing envelopes or signing your name!

Skill
Addition

December 25
Christmas

Helper: _____ Due: _____

Hidden Pictures

At the Library

In this big picture find the shoe, mushroom, crayon, hammer, slice of pie, toothbrush, banana, shovel, paintbrush, slice of cake, pancake turner, and spoon.

Hidden Pictures

Carolers

In this big picture find the fish, cupcake, clothespin, Santa's boot, sailboat, spoon, pencil, candy stick, crown, slice of pie, paintbrush, eyeglasses, dog, and screwdriver.

APPENDIX E
PHOTO ALBUM NIGHT MATERIAL

Photo Album Night

When: Monday, October 19
Time: 5:30-7:00
Where: School
Who: Anyone and Everyone!
Why: Fun, learning, pictures and free food!

Please join us for the fun!!!

Sponsored by the Yearbook Staff

Photo Album Night Schedule

5:30-5:45 Tour hallways looking at pictures
5:45-6:00 Gather in gymnasium for the reading of
Amelia Bedilia's Family Photo Album
6:05-6:20 Demonstration*
6:25-6:40 Demonstration*
6:40-7:00 Gather in cafeteria for popcorn, video and prizes
7:00 PTO meeting in cafeteria

Family Photo Opportunity: Family pictures will be taken throughout the evening in the gymnasium for only $1.00 per picture.

*Demonstrations...
Please choose two of the three demonstrations to attend:
"Create a Creature" in Miss room
"Bug Creation" in Mrs. room
"Create your own Memory Book" in cafeteria

Thank you for attending!

October 23, 1998

Dear Parents:

We are asking your permission to use copies of the photos that were taken at PHOTO ALBUM NIGHT this past Monday, for upcoming school activities. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated!

Thank you!

Mrs. Roach & Miss Johannes

Please sign and return the bottom portion to Mrs. Roach.

PHOTO ALBUM NIGHT PICTURES

_____ I do give permission for copies of my photo to be used.

_____ I do not give permission for copies of my photo to be used.

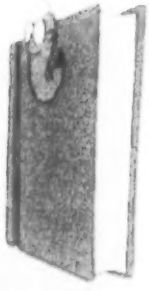
_____ _____

Name Date

We want to give a big

Thank you!

to all of you who have participated in or helped out with the PHOTO ALBUM NIGHT last night!



We had a good turnout and were happy with the way things went. Again, thanks so much for all your hard work!

Amy & Holly

APPENDIX F
SPECIAL FRIEND DAY MATERIAL

71
Welcome to
Special
Friend Day
77

Special Friend Day

On December 8 Elementary School is having a "Special Friend Day." This is a day for your child to bring a Special Friend to school-it may be a parent, grandparent, Aunt, Uncle...any special friend that is an adult. Each classroom has set aside a time for that Special Friend to come and visit. The times are as follows:

1st grade: 11:00-11:40
2nd grade ( ): 9:30-10:00
2nd grade ( ): 10:45-11:29
3rd grade: 10:00-11:00
4th grade: 8:15-9:00
5th grade: 11:00-12:20
6th grade: 1:50-2:30
7th grade: 1:50-2:30
8th grade: 1:50-2:30

Please use the form below to R.S.V.P to our Special Friend day. Remember to sign in the office when you arrive. Thank you! We are looking forward to seeing you! (Please send form back as soon as possible.)

Special Friend:

Student's Name:

Classroom Teacher:

Special Friend Day Keepsake Nametag

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APPENDIX G
SPRING SURVEY

Elementary School
Parent Survey, Spring 1999

In order to better serve the needs of our students, we would appreciate a few minutes of your time to complete this survey. Your responses are important to us.

1. Please indicate the grade level/levels of your children by checking the appropriate categories below.

_____ Pre-K _____K-2 _____ 3-5 _____ 6-8

2. What is your level of participation in activities at Elementary in the past two years?

_____Very often _____ Often _____ Occasionally _____ Never

3. What is the nature of this participation? Please check all that apply.

_____ Parent/Teacher Conferences
_____ Classroom/Room Volunteer
_____ Sporting events
_____ Family Photo Night
_____ Kindergarten Kids Night Out/ Pre-K Parent Night
_____ Parent Orientation Night
_____ Science Fair
_____ Ice Cream Social
_____ Office Business
_____ PTO attendance
_____ Music concerts
_____ Tutoring
_____ Variety show
_____ Family Reading Night
_____ Open House
_____ Other (Please indicate _____)

4. Are there any additional activities you would like to see at Elementary School? Please comment below. _____
_____

5. How often does your child have homework?

_____ Every night _____ 1-3/week
_____ Occasionally _____ Never

6. How would you rate the appropriateness of the homework assigned to your child/children?

_____ Very helpful _____ Helpful _____Not helpful _____Don't know

7. How would you rate the amount of homework assigned?

_____ Excessive _____ Right amount _____ Not enough _____Don't know

8. What category best fits the communication this year, in regards to your child's/children's performance?

_____ Very satisfied _____ Satisfied _____ Not satisfied _____ None

9. How comfortable do you as a parent feel about contacting your child's teacher when your child has a problem/question?
_____Very comfortable ____Comfortable ____ uncomfortable ____ very uncomfortable

Comments_____
_____
_____
_____

10. Are you aware that _____ Elementary has an after school tutoring program? _____yes _____ no

11. Would you be interested in joining other volunteers who give extra help to students during the day or after school? _____yes (Call the school)
_____ no

12. How do you receive your information about school/ student activities?
_____Your child _____Teacher newsletters _____School newsletter
_____ Notes sent home about specific activities _____ Other

11. How well does the *Pipeline* (Newsletter) keep you informed about activities at _____ Elementary School.
_____Very informed _____Informed _____Not informed _____Don't know

12. The following is a list of activities/events which have occurred at _____ Elementary. Which do you feel have been successful and should be continued?

_____ Grade level Parent meetings at the beginning of the year
_____ Open House
_____ Tutoring
_____ Book Fair
_____ Fun Fair
_____ Family Reading Night
_____ Winter/Christmas concert
_____ Summer story time/library check out
_____ Variety Show
_____ Ice Cream Social
_____ Mr. Z's Fund raiser
_____ Market Day
_____ Family Photo Night
_____ Science Fair
Other_____
_____

13. Are you aware of meeting dates for PTO? _____ yes _____no
14. Would you attend more PTO meetings if student activities were held in conjunction with shorter meetings? _____ yes _____no
15. What topics would you be of interest to you if we bring in speakers?
_____
Would you be more likely to attend if there were a special program/speaker?
_____yes _____no

*Thank you for your input. We want to make _____ Elementary an even better school. Please feel free to write additional comments below or on the back of the survey.*_____

APPENDIX H
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Clipper Ship Gazette??

September 1, 1998 Volume 2, Issue 1

Announcing the Announcement Crew

This year's morning announcements will be given by the following eighth graders: Stephanie , Gina , Dan , Beatris , Roberto , Justin , Esmeralda , Jessica , Beth , Jessi , Paige , Barb , Mike , Steve , and Sami

Please save and send in any extra green berry baskets you may have.

New

Hey Clippers, is this the name you want for this year's newspaper? Let us know what you think. The procedure is simple. Write down the name you want your paper to have as well as your name and grade. Hand this to Mrs. , Miss , or a student member of the Gazette staff by Tuesday September 15. The winning title will be on the next issue.

NEWS FROM YOU

Do you have something to announce in the newspaper? If so, we'd like to print it. This procedure is easy, too! Pick up an empty form from the office bulletin board, fill it out, and give it to Mrs. , Miss , or a student member of the Gazette staff. We will take care of the rest for you.

WELCOME BACK

The new Clipper Ship Gazette staff would like to welcome you all back ro another great year of news and information about our school. Be sure to read the calendar each month for *lots* important information. For example, this month's calendar has the schedule for Orientations and Open House. DON'T MISS OUT ON GREAT SCHOOL EVENTS!!! We are looking forward to everyone's support at school activities this year. See you soon....

Sincerely,
The Gazette Staff

ATTENTION FIRST GRADERS

We want to publish your writing samples in the October issue. Please pick one of your favorite stories you've written. Be sure your name and grade are written on the top. Give your story to Mrs. or your teacher by Tuesday, September 15. We can't wait to read your great stories!

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CHEERLEADING

Cheerleading tryouts for the 1998-99 season will be held on October 23. Start stretching out and practicing now. Don't forget to show your Capron pride!!

GOOD LUCK!!

MORE CHEERLEADING NEWS...

Kim attended the National Cheerleaders' Association Camp held at Rockford College the week of July 14 -17. She received an All-American Cheerleader Nomination with a Superior rating. Congrats Kim!!

Mrs. also attended the National Cheerleaders' Association Coaches' Clinic during the week of July 14 - 17 and received her NCA Coaches' Certification.

SUMMER READING

A great big thanks to everyone who helped out with the summer library program! Mrs. and Mrs. were available for checking out books and Mrs. Mrs. , Miss , Mrs. and Mrs. spent time reading to the students. Thank you for supporting the wonderful world of reading.

HEALTH INFORMATION

You may receive the following shots on the following days at the County Health Department:

Hepatitis B #1 - 9/17
Hepatitis B #2 - 10/20
Pneumonia/Flu - 10/13

WANTED:

Adult Crossing Guards

If you are interested in helping us out with this or would like some more information, please contact Mrs. at .

SUMMER TIME WELL SPENT

Are you a girl in 4th, 5th, 6th, or 7th grade, and are planning to play Volleyball next year? Or do you like to play Volleyball, and you just need something to do next summer. Then you should consider going to Volleyball camp.

continued- SUMMER TIME WELL SPENT

Volleyball camp is loads of fun, and it is a great way to improve your skills. I went to two Volleyball camps this summer, and both of them were a ton of fun.

One of the camps was held at North Boone Elementary, and was attended by approximately 50 girls entering 5th, 6th, 7th, or 8th grade.

, who went to when she was in grade school, taught the camp. She is an expert Volley player,and has won many awards and titles for her abilities. Aside from learning and practicing the basics, such as the proper way to pass, set, and the approach for hitting, we

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continued- SUMMER TIME WELL SPENT

played lots of fun games and warm-ups. We even played some competitive team games.

The other time I went to was at Christian High School. This was a fun camp to go to because I got to meet a lot of new people. Mr. was the camp instructor. He is very nice and a lot of fun. He is also the Christian Varsity Volleyball Coach. I also liked this particular camp because Mr.

had high school players assist him and teach us drills, warm-ups, and other things he needed help with. It was really great to learn, and get help, from the older girls. This camp was good, but it took a lot of hard work and dedication. It met for 3 hours a day for a week.

Friday, or candy day as we at camp called it, was the best day. Mr. rewarded us with candy for doing well in performing our skills, winning in competitive team games and making really good plays.

cont- SUMMER

camp is a wonderful way to spend your free time during the summer. Neither camp was a waste of anyone's time. I learned a lot more than I knew last year. I am sure that I comply the skills that I learned to my play this year.

By: Ame

MONDAY 9\21

PTO MEETING:
6:30 - 6:50

OPEN HOUSE:
6:30 - 8:00

ICE CREAM SOCIAL:
7:30 - 8:00

COME SEE YOUR CHILD'S CLASSROOM

KINDERGARTEN KIDS' NIGHT OUT!!!!

Kdg. student's, bring your parent(s) to the room on MONDAY,SEPT 28th . Morning class will run from 5:30pm to 6:30 and afternoon will come from 6:30 pm to 7:30pm.. Little brothers and sisters will not be able to come with you, there will not be enough room for everyone. Please have your activity bag decorated and returned to the room by Sept. 25th. Mrs.

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Welcome Back!

The 1998-99 school year promises to be a great one. The classrooms are ready, and the students have been busy with their first assignments. We have some new faces around the building this year. We are welcoming Mr. , our new science teacher, Mrs. , who will be teaching second grade, Mrs. , fourth grade, Miss , prekindergarten, Mrs. , the lunch aide and Ms. , our new reading aide.

We had a productive Saturday PTO Work Day on August 22 from 9:00-11:30. Several families showed up with rakes and shovels to do the various jobs. Thanks go to the , Sue and Emma , Debbie and Michelle , The Family, Brian , the , Jessica , Courtney , Al and Mr. for their hard work. Lunch was provided by the PTO. A special thanks goes to Lisa for helping us out in the office with handbook.

Here are some important reminders to keep in mind:

1. Students are not to be on school grounds before 7:50.
2. The Agendas for grades 3-8 are a wonderful means of communication with your child's teacher. It also contains information concerning that age old question "What did you do at school today?" Please ask to see it every night and insist that it comes home.
3. Lunch tickets are on sale from 7:50-8:10 in the office or hallway. We encourage you to buy tickets in groups of five.
4. News letters will come home at the beginning of the month and will contain important information, the calendar of events and the lunch menu. Please encourage your child to bring the newsletter home.
5. Please call the office if your child is ill before 9:00 AM. There is an answering machine for this purpose also. Homework can be sent home after three days of absences.
6. We want to keep an open line of communication with parents. Please let us know if you have any questions.
7. Only **gym shoes** which have not been worn for regular use will be allowed on the gym floor for PE. Your child **can use a pair that has been washed and sent to school without being worn anywhere else. This does not need to be a new pair of shoes.** The dust that collects on the soles makes the gym floor incredibly slippery for basketball season.
8. Volleyball games are at 4:30 this year. Remember grade school students in fourth grade and below need to be accompanied by an adult for supervision during all home games.
9. Please circle the following dates on your calendar:

Wed., September 2 -Orientation for grades 1-5
6:00-6:30.....Grades 1&5, 6:30-7:00..... Grades 2
7:00-7:30.....Grades 3&4
Mon. Sept. 21 .....Open House 6:30

I'm looking forward to a great year! Mrs.

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Secrets of Effective Discipline

Time after time, parents, teachers, and principals rank discipline as one of the top problems they face. But what is discipline? Some people think it means punishing kids and making them obey.

Actually, effective discipline has more to do with teaching children to make good decisions—and to be responsible for their behavior. Plus, effective discipline is a key to school success.

What's the secret to discipline that works? Start with the seven ideas below.

Set limits—fair but firm

Since no two families are alike, only you can decide what rules work for you. But all children need rules that are fair and easy to follow.

It's best to sit down with your children and explain each rule. If your kids see them as fair, they'll find them much easier to accept—and obey. Once the rules are in place, firmly enforce them. The fewer the rules, the better.

Finally, state rules in a positive way that tell children what you *do* want—not what you don't want.

Tip: Some areas in which families choose to make rules: Peacefulness—settle disagreements without violence. Respectfulness—speak politely. Routines—follow a set bedtime on weekdays. Permission—ask before going out.

Use the power of consequences

This might be one of the most effective discipline techniques you can use. It teaches children that their actions have results—and shows them that they are responsible for what they do.

There are two types of consequences. Some happen naturally. *Examples:* Bike left out in the rain? It rusts. Homework missed? You get a zero.

Sometimes a consequence to misbehavior isn't automatic—you have to pick it. The trick is finding consequences that relate to the misbehavior. Fighting over TV? It's turned off. Toy misused? It's put away for a while. Curfew missed? Stay home next time.

It can be difficult to stand by and watch your children learn a hard lesson. But if you try to shield them from mistakes, they will lose an opportunity to learn.

Tell your children—in advance—what consequences you plan to use. Then you won't be in the hot seat trying to figure out what to do when you're upset. Some families write down consequences along with the rules.

DISCIPLINE AT SCHOOL

1. Talk with your child about school rules and regulations—and their importance.
2. Show interest in your child's activities.
3. Talk to teachers about your child's behavior and ask for suggestions.
4. If there's a problem at school, talk to your child and get his viewpoint.
5. If a problem continues, contact the teacher.
6. Team up with the teacher to come up with appropriate consequences.

Be consistent but flexible

When your children break a rule, try to deal with it the same way each time—even if they plead, beg, and whine. Giving in tells them the rule isn't firm and that you'll change it if they keep nagging.

Being consistent is challenging. Why? Because children know their parents' "soft" spots and often push them every chance they get. "Oh, come on, Mom. Don't be *mean*. You let Joey do his homework later!"

Tip: Being consistent doesn't mean you can't be flexible. If you have a visitor, for example, it's fine to extend bedtime. The important thing is to explain why the rule isn't being followed. "You can stay up later tonight so you'll have more time to be with Gramps."

over, please

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Secrets of effective discipline

Give encouragement and praise

Children often repeat behavior that gets your attention. When they do something you like, notice it! Whether it's making the team or getting a good grade in school, children need their successes recognized.

Comment on efforts and improvements, too, such as waking up on time in the morning or tackling homework without prodding. Praise works best when it is specific to behavior. *Example:* "I see you cleared your place after dinner. I appreciate your help." Praise least effective when it describes the child, not the job ("What a good boy you are!").

Tip: Here's a secret that will have a big impact on behavior. Try adding privileges when kids do well. It encourages them to try even harder. Find privileges your children will really appreciate, such as a special outing or staying up later.

Set up routines

Tired of all the hassles surrounding mornings, chores, and bedtime? Try using simple routines.

Children thrive on routines. Once they're in place, they know what to do without needing constant directions. Doing the right thing becomes automatic and family life is less chaotic.

For example, a typical bedtime routine may start at 8:15 p.m. and include: book bag ready to go, bath taken, pajamas on, teeth brushed, and bathroom picked up—all by 8:45 p.m.

Don't sweat the small stuff

Whenever possible, try to ignore little things. In other words, pick and choose your battles. It will make life a lot more pleasant. Let's say your child is being annoying. Consider ignoring the behavior that's not destructive or dangerous. Your lack of attention takes away your child's audience and spoils the fun!

When possible, keep a sense of humor. Laughter helps keep communication alive. For example, your child's room is so messy that you feel like blowing up. Try saying, "Looks like a tornado hit. As soon as you clean up the debris, we'll make some cookies together!"

Love works magic

All the best discipline theories in the world won't work without love. Children respond best when they understand the rules are there because you care. Your relationship is the basis upon which everything else rests.

You can cement your relationship by talking, listening, and spending time with each of your children—even when life gets hectic. Some parents actually write in parent/child dates on their calendars.

When your children's behavior gets out of hand, sometimes it's hard to see the positive. It helps to look beyond the behavior and focus on their strengths.

Children don't learn right from wrong overnight. But, with time and patience, most children eventually learn to do the right thing—even when you're not around.

Tip: Kids need to know you love them—and hear it often—no matter how old they are.

DISCIPLINE CHECKLIST

- ☑ I involve my children in making family rules and decisions.
- ☑ My children know what will happen when they break rules.
- ☑ I provide consequences that are fair and relate to the rule broken.
- ☑ I try to be consistent in the way I respond to misbehavior.
- ☑ I notice my children's efforts and accomplishments.
- ☑ My children know and follow routines at home.
- ☑ I try to ignore nondestructive, attention-getting behavior.
- ☑ I don't expect perfection in myself or my children.

Editor's Note: If behavior problems are severe and nothing seems to work, it may be valuable to look for help. Check with the school counselor or your family doctor.

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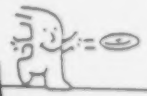
Home & School CONNECTION

Working Together for School Success

September 1998



SHORT NOTES

Get involved

Team up with the teacher. How? Start by sending a quick note. Tell her some of your child's hobbies or favorite activities. It lets the teacher know you want to stay in touch—and helps her to better understand your child.

Read all about it!

Spark your children's interest in reading with a home message center. Leave simple notes on a small chalkboard or bulletin board. As their reading skills grow, you can post comics, jokes, or interesting articles from a newspaper or magazine.

DID YOU KNOW?

A healthy breakfast boosts your child's brainpower. Studies show that children who eat breakfast do better on tests—and have fewer behavior problems. They also work faster and concentrate more easily.

Worth quoting

"Character is how we act when we think that no one is watching."
Anonymous

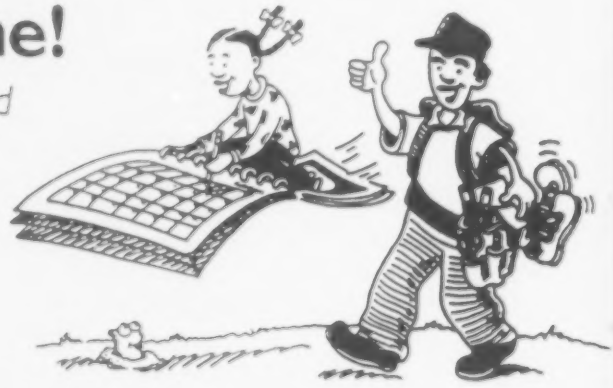
JUST FOR FUN

Teacher: Name one important thing we have today that we didn't have 20 years ago.

Student: Me!

Tool time!

Getting organized



Imagine a carpenter pounding nails with a paintbrush or a nurse taking your pulse with a thermometer. Without the right tools, even easy tasks can seem impossible.

Your child also needs the right tools to stay organized this school year. Here are four ideas to help your youngster keep track of things.

"When's my project due?"

A small notepad can help your child remember projects, homework assignments, and test dates—plus information about what to study. Have him keep it in his book bag so it's handy at home and at school.

"Is the field trip today?"

Hang a monthly calendar in your child's room. Each week, help her transfer project and test dates from her notepad. She can also add items from the school calendar and after-school activity schedules. Urge her to check it every night.

"I can't find my homework!"

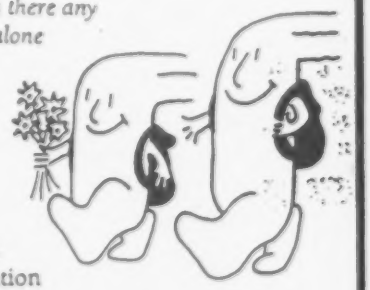
Avoid a last-minute scramble to find things in the morning. Pick a convenient shelf or corner where your child can store all the items he'll need for school the next day. *Examples:* backpack, library book, permission slip.

"I'm out of paper!"

Together, create a "supply basket" for doing projects and homework. Fill it with paper, pencils, pencil sharpener, pens, glue stick, scissors, and crayons or colored markers. ♥

Q & A SIBLINGS HOME ALONE

Q: *I don't get home from work until 5:00. Is there any problem with leaving my third grader home alone with his sixth-grade brother?*



A: Caring for a younger brother or sister is a major responsibility. Many experts agree it's expecting too much of a sixth grader. Children in elementary school are safer—and feel more secure—in a supervised setting.

Check out after-school programs in your area. Look into those offered by your parks and recreation department or even ones held at your child's school. Or have a responsible teen or adult fill in until you get home. ♥

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Take a guess

Will the groceries in your cart cost $40—or $60? Usually, you have a pretty good idea. Estimating skills also come in handy for children. Sharpen your child's estimation ability with these quick math activities.

● **Time.** Ask your child to guess how long he spends taking a shower. Is it more—or less—than other family members? Let him check his guesses with a clock.

● **Measurement.** With a tape measure, let your youngster measure one room. Then have her estimate the size of others—*without measuring*. How close were her estimates?

● **Money.** When shopping, pick out two or three items. Ask your child to guess how much they'll cost altogether. A calculator can help him compare his guess to the total. ♥

PARENT TO PARENT

A good night's rest

Mornings were a mess at my house! My 6-year-old Sarah and 9-year-old Greg were always tired and cranky. At least three times a week, they almost missed the bus. I realized they weren't getting enough sleep.

I decided to make bedtime 30 minutes earlier on school nights. I also told them they had to put away their belongings, shower, and brush their teeth—before their scheduled bedtimes.

That first night, Sarah and Greg complained and wasted lots of time getting ready for bed. It took them more than an hour!

The next night, I turned off the TV an hour before their bedtimes to give them plenty of time. They knew I meant business. They got ready in record time!

To sweeten the deal, I offered to read an extra bedtime story. If they were ready on time, they'd get two stories instead of one. That really seemed to motivate them. I think I'm onto something! ♥

The magic of air pressure

SCIENCE ACTIVITY

Seeing is believing. Teach your young scientist about air pressure by showing how it works.

Materials: kitchen sink, clear plastic cup, scrap paper

Start by filling up your kitchen sink with water. Ask your child to crumple some paper and stuff it into the bottom of a clear plastic cup. Next, have your child turn the cup upside down and push it to the bottom of the sink. Then, lift it straight up out of the water. Magic—the paper stays dry! Can your child guess why?

Explain that air trapped inside the cup keeps the water from touching the paper. ♥

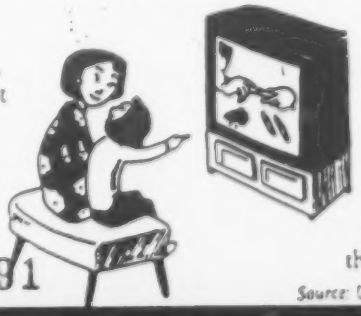
Talking about drugs

If you've already started talking to your elementary school child about drugs, you're very wise. What you say now can make a big difference later. In fact, research shows that discussing drugs regularly has a positive impact on children's behavior.

Your child doesn't automatically know what you think about drugs. Share your beliefs using clear, simple statements, such as, "We don't want you to use drugs—they're dangerous and illegal."

Watch for opportunities to talk about the dangers of drugs. For example, if marijuana is mentioned on TV, let your child know it's harmful—especially to growing bodies.

Be sure to ask your child if she has any questions about drugs. She may be getting the wrong information from friends and other sources.



For more information, read *Growing Up Drug Free: A Parent's Guide to Prevention*. It's a free booklet about drugs and their effects. It also contains suggestions for parents. To order a copy, call 1-800-624-0100 and request the booklet by name. ♥

Source: U.S. Dept of Education

OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ideas that promote school success, parent involvement, and more effective parenting.

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September 1998

To Parents of eighth grade and resource students:

We are currently working on our master's thesis, as some of you already know. The subject of our research plan is "Parental Involvement." In order to help us with this project, your child will be completing a student survey. Along with this student survey, we are asking you, as the parents, to take a few moments to complete a separate survey tonight. This research is strictly confidential, and therefore, you do not need to identify yourself by name on the surveys.

We thank you in advance for your cooperation!

Miss Johannes Mrs. Roach

Miss Johannes & Mrs. Roach

Open House

- 6:30-6:50 PTO Meeting
- 6:30-8:00 Open House
- 7:30-8:00 Ice Cream Social

Monday, September 21, 1998

APPENDIX I
SPRING SURVEY RESULTS

Elementary School
Parent Survey, Spring 1999

In order to better serve the needs of our students, we would appreciate a few minutes of your time to complete this survey. Your responses are important to us.

1. Please indicate the grade level/levels of your children by checking the appropriate categories below.

4 Pre-K 8 K-2 6 3-5 2 6-8

2. What is your level of participation in activities at Elementary in the past two years?

4 Very often 6 Often 4 Occasionally 1 Never

3. What is the nature of this participation? Please check all that apply.

16 Parent/Teacher Conferences
8 Classroom/Room Volunteer
2 Sporting events
2 Family Photo Night
7 Kindergarten Kids Night Out/ Pre-K Parent Night
8 Parent Orientation Night
8 Science Fair
3 Ice Cream Social
2 Office Business
PTO attendance
11 Music concerts
1 Tutoring
6 Variety show
3 Family Reading Night
13 Open House
Other (Please indicate _____)

4. Are there any additional activities you would like to see at Elementary School? Please comment below. _____

_____

5. How often does your child have homework?

3 Every night 3 1-3/week
7 Occasionally 3 Never

6. How would you rate the appropriateness of the homework assigned to your child/children?

3 Very helpful 10 Helpful Not helpful 1 Don't know 2 N/A

7. How would you rate the amount of homework assigned?

2 Excessive 8 Right amount 1 Not enough 3 Don't know

8. What category best fits the communication this year, in regards to your child's/children's performance?

4 Very satisfied 11 Satisfied 3 Not satisfied None

9. How comfortable do you as a parent feel about contacting your child's teacher when your child has a problem/question?
10 Very comfortable 6 Comfortable ___ uncomfortable ___ very uncomfortable

Comments_____

10. Are you aware that Elementary has an after school tutoring program? 10 yes 6 no

11. Would you be interested in joining other volunteers who give extra help to students during the day or after school? 9 yes (Call the school)
___ no

12. How do you receive your information about school/ student activities?
10 Your child 10 Teacher newsletters 12 School newsletter
11 Notes sent home about specific activities ___ Other

11. How well does the *Pipeline* (Newsletter) keep you informed about activities at Elementary School.
4 Very informed 12 Informed ___ Not informed ___ Don't know

12. The following is a list of activities/events which have occurred at Elementary. Which do you feel have been successful and should be continued?
12 Grade level Parent meetings at the beginning of the year
11 Open House
9 Tutoring
12 Book Fair
8 Fun Fair
7 Family Reading Night
13 Winter/Christmas concert
6 Summer story time/library check out
8 Variety Show
5 Ice Cream Social
7 Mr. Z's Fund raiser
7 Market Day
5 Family Photo Night
9 Science Fair
Other_____

13. Are you aware of meeting dates for PTO? 11 yes 5 no
14. Would you attend more PTO meetings if student activities were held in conjunction with shorter meetings? 6 yes 3 no 3 Maybe
15. What topics would you be of interest to you if we bring in speakers?

Would you be more likely to attend if there were a special program/speaker?
7 yes 4 no

*Thank you for your input. We want to make Elementary an even better school. Please feel free to write additional comments below or on the back of the survey.*_____

152 families at this school. Sixteen spring surveys returned.

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APPENDIX J
LITERACY PROGRAM

"Most adults who can't read well were never read to as children," says educator Nancye Gaj (leading a Motheread class in Raleigh, N.C.).

Page Turners

By focusing on children's books, Nancye Gaj's literacy program helps teach parents to read to their kids

At first, it sounds like a typical book-club meeting. In a community room of a Raleigh, N.C., apartment complex, nine parents and grandparents, aged 29 to 71, discuss the motivations of characters in a book. "Over the course of the story, did her good change?" asks the group's leader, Deborah Williams. "It was forced," one woman says eagerly.

But they're not talking about Elizabeth Bennet or Emma Bovary. They're referring to the hero of the children's book *Miranda and Brother Wind*. The members read passages aloud, hesitating, sounding out each word. "Mah-RY-an?" falters one, trying to pronounce a character's name. Assistant teacher Sweet Archie gently corrects her.

Welcome to Motheread, a non-profit organization that uses children's books to improve adult reading skills. The parents attend the weekly meetings, explains Motheread founder Nancye Gaj, because of their "powerful motivation" to read to their children. "There are all the learn-to-read-better campaigns, but what if a person doesn't want to learn to read better?" asks Gaj, 49. "Well, maybe they don't, but every

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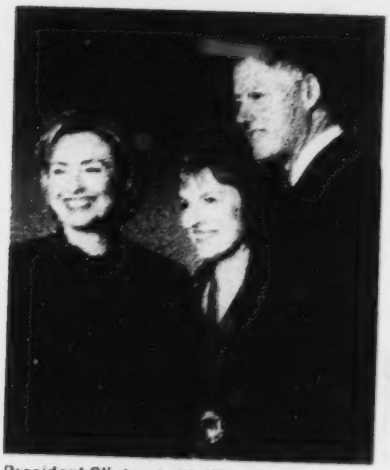
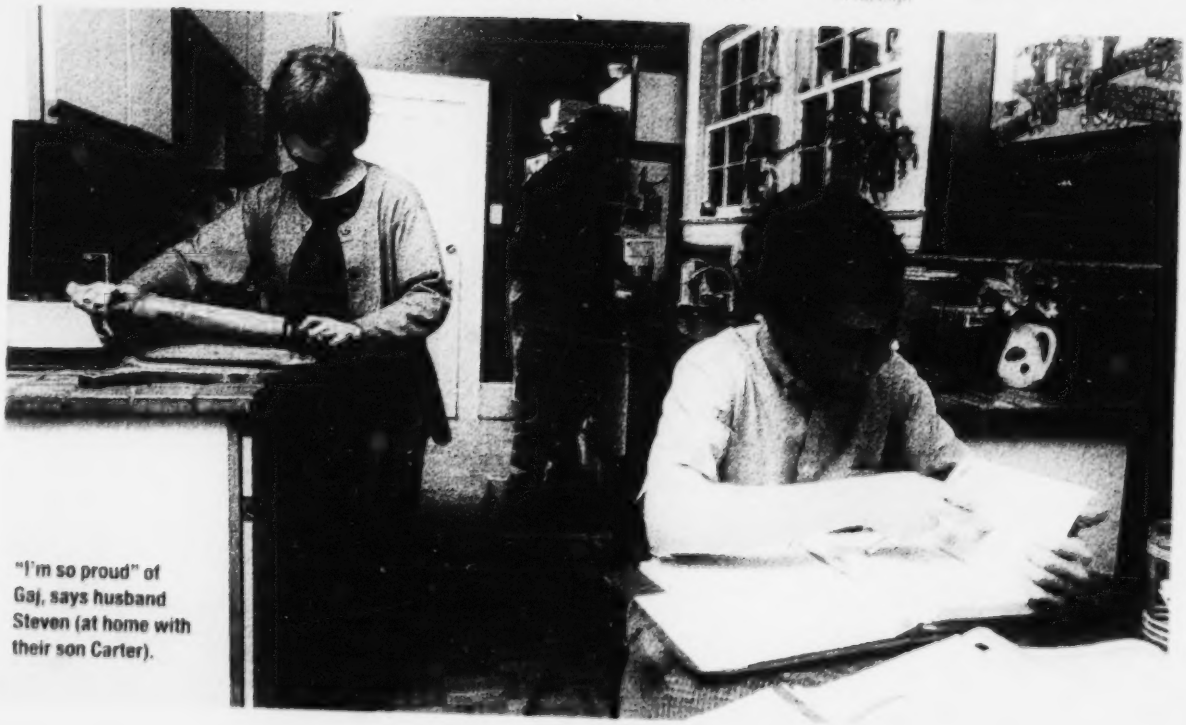


President Clinton (with Hillary and Gaj) calls her "a true revolutionary of literacy."

- Sophfronia Scott Gregory
- Gail Wescott and Amy Laughinghouse in Raleigh



"I'm so proud" of Gaj, says husband Steven (at home with their son Carter).

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